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cont.

--24. (amended) The device according to Claim 23, wherein said means for receiving data are arranged to check, after reception of the data from the information carrier, whether the value of a counter on the information carrier lies within predefined limits, and, if this is the case, to instruct the information carrier to adjust the value of the counter, and, if this is not the case, to block the printing of the franking mark.--

R E M A R K S

The specification has been amended to make editorial changes to place the application in condition for allowance at the time of the next Official Action.

A substitute Abstract of the Disclosure is provided on an accompanying separate sheet.

Claims 1-27 are present in the application. Claims 2-9 and 11-24 are amended to address the claim objections noted in the Official Action.

Claims 1-9 (drawn to the method) and claims 10-11, 13-16, 19-21, 23-25 and 27 (drawn to the system/device) are rejected as being anticipated by TAKAI et al. 6,024,287. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 of the present application recites a method for printing a franking mark on a document, the franking mark at least comprises information relating to a unique bit string

and an identification code, the bit string is selected from a centrally stored set of unique bit strings and the unique bit strings that are made available for use are centrally registered.

Accordingly, the preferred embodiment of the present application is a method and device used in the field of distributing mail items. One having ordinary skill in the art would understand that a franking mark printed on a mail item is a way to show payment of postage.

As recited in claim 1 of the present application, the franking mark comprises information relating to a unique bit string. The bit string is selected from a centrally stored set of unique bit strings. As disclosed on page 13, line 24, through page 14, line 9 of the present application, for example, the set of unique bit strings is stored in a memory 38 in the exchange or central terminal 34. The central terminal is connected with several terminals 2 distributed across the country and can, for example, via the public switched telephone network 46, make available one or more unique franking numbers from the set of unique franking numbers for the terminal 2. The set of unique franking numbers in the memory 38 of the exchange 34 consists, for example, of bit strings of 128 bits. Thus, the set of unique franking numbers contains such a large number of unique

franking numbers that the need for such numbers will be covered for many years.

In contrast, TAKAI et al. disclose a fingerprint validation system wherein the fingerprint of a holder of an identification card is printed on the card so that a fingerprint reader can validate whether the holder of the card is the legal holder or owner of the identification card. The method and system of TAKAI et al. are not believed pertinent to a method for printing a franking mark on a document as recited in claim 1 of the present application.

Specifically, TAKAI et al. do not disclose making available a unique bit string that is selected from a centrally stored set of unique bit strings, as recited in claim 1 of the present application.

As disclosed on column 9, lines 53-63 of TAKAI et al., a fingerprint pattern 19 of an ID card 25 is read by a card image reader 6. In addition, the fingerprint pattern of the ID card holder is read by the fingerprint reader 10. The fingerprint pattern 19 and the fingerprint pattern of the card holder are both subjected to Fast Fourier Transform in a subtractor 8 to extract ID information 9 specifying the user. Accordingly, the fingerprint (presumed to be the unique bit string of TAKAI et al.) are generated from a person holding the ID card and are locally stored on each ID card. TAKAI et al. do not disclose or suggest that the bit string is selected

from a centrally stored set of unique bit strings, as recited in claim 1 of the present application.

In addition, claim 1 recites that the unique bit strings that are made available for use are centrally registered. As noted above, a central storage 34 has, for example, a memory 38 that stores or centrally registers the unique bit strings.

The Official Action states that column 9, lines 40-47 of TAKAI et al. discloses that the unique bit strings that are made available are centrally registered. This assertion is not supported by the reference. Specifically, column 9, lines 40-47 of TAKAI et al. disclose that the ID information is recorded on the magnetic stripe. However, the IC card may be used in place of the magnetic card and, for example, the ID information may be stored into EEPROM, a flash memory, or the like. Accordingly, TAKAI et al. teach that ID information is recorded either on a magnetic stripe of an ID card or in an ID card having a flash memory.

TAKAI et al. do not disclose or suggest that the unique bit strings that are made available for use are centrally registered. In addition, the above-noted passage appears to be directed to what is noted in the Official Action as the identification code, not the unique bit string.

For the reasons set forth above, claim 1 is believed patentable over TAKAI et al.

Claims 2-9 depend from claim 1 and further define the invention and are also believed patentable over TAKAI et al.

In addition, claim 2 recites that the unique bit string and the identification code are stored by a terminal on an information carrier with memory and the step of printing the franking mark in claim 1 takes place after the reading of the information carrier by a printing device. By way of example, a information carrier 18 is inserted into terminal 2 and the unique bit string and the identification code are stored on the information carrier 18 (chip card). The information carrier 18 is then removed from the terminal 2 and placed inside franking machine 20 which reads the information carrier 18.

Claim 3 recites that besides the unique bit string and the information code, a terminal identification code is also stored on the information carrier. By way of example, a plurality of terminals 2 connected to the central terminal 34 are distributed in different locations throughout a particular state. Each terminal 2 has a terminal identification code. This enables the then user to determine which particular terminal the franking mark was obtained from. TAKAI et al. do not disclose or suggest multiple terminals that would require each terminal to have a separate terminal identification code that is then stored on an information carrier.

Claim 4 recites that after reading an information carrier by the printing device, use of the unique bit string for printing a further franking mark on a further document is rendered impossible by the printing device. Accordingly, after a further franking mark has been printed on the first document, the printing device does not allow any further printing using that same franking mark. TAKAI et al. only determines the validity of an ID card. The ID card is either valid or not. TAKAI et al. do not disclose or suggest allowing a first printing and then not allowing any further printing, as recited in claim 4.

Claim 5 recites that after reading the information carrier it is checked whether the value of a counter on the information carrier lies within a predefined limit. Such predefined limit is a preset spending limit for example. The passage noted in the Official Action refers to frequency values and image data. TAKAI et al. do not disclose or suggest a counter, as recited in claim 5 of the present application.

Claim 9 recites that the set of unique bit strings is stored on the first central memory, used combinations of identification codes and unique bit strings are stored in a second central memory, franking marks printed on documents are read in, combinations of identification codes and unique bit strings which are present in the read-in franking marks are

stored in a third central memory and are compared to the used combinations in the second central memory.

The Official Action has cited various passages from column 8 through column 10 of TAKAI et al. that allegedly provide support that claim 9 is anticipated by TAKAI et al. Further clarification of the first, second and third central memories and the specific functions as recited in claim 9 is respectfully requested.

As set forth above, none of the features of the above dependent claims is disclosed in the reference, and thus these claims are believed patentable regardless of the patentability of claim 1 from which they depend.

Claim 10 of the present application recites means for making available a unique bit string comprising a first centrally arranged memory with a set of unique bit strings from which the unique bit string is selected and that the means are provided for centrally registering which unique bit strings have been made available for use. As noted above regarding claim 1, TAKAI et al. teach local storage on an ID card, not central storage or specifically means for making available a unique bit string comprises a first centrally arranged memory with a set of unique bit strings, as recited in claim 10. The comments above regarding claim 1 are equally applicable to claim 10.

Claims 11-21 depend from claim 10 and further define the invention and are also believed patentable over the cited prior art. In addition, the comments above regarding claims 2-9 are equally applicable to claims 11-21.

Further, claims 10-21 are presented in the §112, sixth paragraph format. Therefore, the applied art must teach or suggest "the corresponding structure described in the specification or equivalents thereof." Applicants believe that the fingerprint validity system, including identification cards as disclosed in TAKAI et al. is not an equivalent of the recited means for securely printing a franking mark on a document or means for making available a unique bit string comprising a first centrally arranged memory with a set of unique bit strings, as disclosed on page 11, line 1 through page 12, line 29, and as shown in Figure 1 of the present application. Accordingly, claims 10-21 are believed allowable.

Claim 23 recites a device for printing a franking mark on a document, the device includes means for receiving data from an information carrier, said data at least comprising a unique bit string originating from a set of unique bit strings, for compiling and making data available for the franking mark for the document to protect forms so that the device can print the franking mark on the document securely.

Claim 23 is also written in 35 USC §112, sixth paragraph format. Applicants believe that the device for printing a fingerprint on a card as disclosed at column 8, lines 17-34 of TAKAI et al., is not a device for printing a franking mark on a document that includes means for receiving data from an information carrier, the data at least comprising a unique bit string originating from a set of unique bit strings, and means for compiling and making data available for the franking mark for the document in protected form, as disclosed on page 11, line 1, through page 12, line 29, and as shown in Figure 1 of the present application.

Specifically, the fingerprint of TAKAI et al. is associated with a specific person. TAKAI et al. do not disclose or suggest a unique set of bit strings from which a unique bit string is compiled and data from that bit string is made available for the franking mark.

Claim 24 depends from claim 23 and further defines the invention and is also believed patentable over the cited prior art. In addition, claim 24 includes a counter. The comments above regarding claim 5 are equally applicable to claim 24.

Claim 25 recites an information carrier provided with a memory which at least contains a unique bit string selected from a set of unique bit strings. The fingerprint

(bit string) of TAKAI et al. is not selected from a set of unique bit strings.

Claim 27 recites a data carrier wave provided with software enabling the computer to execute a method including the reception of a unique bit string where the bit string is received from a centrally stored set of unique bit strings. As noted above regarding claim 1, TAKAI et al. do not disclose or suggest a centrally stored set of unique bit strings.

Claims 12, 17, 18, and 22 are rejected as unpatentable over TAKAI et al. in view of KUBATZKI et al. 6,064,994. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

KUBATZKI et al. is cited for the teaching of an exchange of data between unprotected and protected card memory areas.

KUBATZKI et al. do not disclose or suggest what is recited in claim 10. As noted above, TAKAI et al. do not disclose or suggest what is recited in claim 10. Since claims 12, 17, and 18 depend from claim 10 and further define the invention, the combination of references would not render obvious claims 12, 17, and 18.

Regarding claim 22, as noted above, TAKAI et al. do not disclose or suggest a central memory, or specifically a first central memory, a second central memory, and a third central memory, as recited in claim 22. KUBATZKI et al. do not teach or suggest first, second, or third central memories.

Accordingly, the combination of references would not render obvious claim 22.

In addition, an exchange as recited in claim 22 is a central station (used as a noun), not a physical exchange between two elements (used as a verb) in KUBATZKI et al.

Specifically, the passage noted in the Official Action (column 16, lines 1-13) refers to an exchange of data between a protected area of the card memory and an unprotected memory of the card memory. KUBATZKI et al. do not teach or suggest an exchange (central station) having first, second, and third memories, as recited in claim 22 of the present application.

Claim 26 is rejected as unpatentable over TAKAI et al. in view of PEYRET 5,688,056. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

PEYRET is cited for the teaching of a method of controlling a printer in order to print legitimate postal marks. PEYRET does not teach or suggest reception of a unique bit string where the bit string is received from a centrally stored set of unique bit strings, as recited in claim 26. As noted above regarding claim 1, TAKAI et al. do not disclose or suggest a centrally stored set of unique bit strings. The above-noted features are missing from each of the references, are absent from the combination, and thus are not obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art.

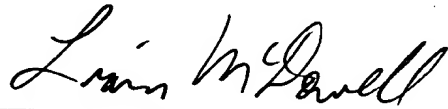
In view of the present amendment and the foregoing remarks, it is believed that the present application has been placed in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the abstract, specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned **"Version with markings to show changes made."**

Respectfully submitted,

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